THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY
AWARENESS AND RESPONSE TO HOLOCAUST
INTERVIEW WITH MR. BENJAMIN GOODMAN

BY A. MARK LEVIN
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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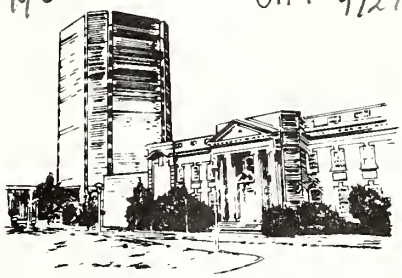

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JANUARY 29, 1990

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PLACE MEMPHIS Tennessee

DATE January 29, 1990

Benjamin Goodman

(Interviewee)

A. Mark Levin

(For the Mississippi Valley Archives of the John Willard Brister Library of Memphis State University)

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THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD AT MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF MEMPHIS AND ITS AWARENESS OF, AND RESPONSE TO, THE GROWING CRISIS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN GERMANY UNDER HITLER, 1938-1939." TODAY IS MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 1990. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. BENJAMIN GOODMAN, 115 SOUTH ROSE ROAD, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS BY A. MARK LEVIN. THE INTERVIEW WAS TRANSCRIBED BY RUTH COX AND EDITED BY A. MARK LEVIN.

MR. LEVIN: Mr. Goodman, I appreciate the opportunity to visit and talk with you. Do I have your permission to tape this interview?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, you do.

MR. LEVIN: If we might begin with some personal biographical details. Where were you born, Mr. Goodman, and when?

MR. GOODMAN: I was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on February 18, 1904. I just celebrated my eighty-sixth birthday.

MR. LEVIN: Mazal-Tov! [Congratulations] Happy birthday!

MR. GOODMAN: Thank you. My parents were Benjamin and Leah Hirsch Goodman -- both born in Memphis. I have now all four grandparents buried in the cemetery here, along with my mother and father, and one pair of great-grandparents, named Levy, who were the mother and father of my paternal grandmother. They all came, except one, from southern Germany -- Wuetenberg.

MR. LEVIN: How do you spell Wuetenberg?

MR. GOODMAN: W-U-E-T-E-N-B-E-R-G. A state in southern Germany, later incorporated by Bismarck in the Prussian Germany when they formed the German Empire. And Bavaria, which is a state in the south --

MR. LEVIN: When did they emigrate from southern Germany to Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: Before that, my grandmother was not from Germany.

MR. LEVIN: Mrs. Hirsch?

MR. GOODMAN: Mrs. Hirsch. Her other name was Levy. Born Levy. She was from Alsace, but Alsace was German and French and went back and forth. And she was more German than French, although she was a French national. She was born in a little town in Alsace north of Strassbourg. My paternal grandfather came [to the United States] as a young man, [because] he didn't want to be in the armed forces, I gather. And he came over when he was sixteen years old, and he had some relative who had preceded him in Philadelphia or someplace.

MR. LEVIN: Approximately what year did he come over?

MR. GOODMAN: The 1840's or 1850's. My grandmother came a little later. They all came about that time. Before the Civil War, I think.

MR. LEVIN: And when did your family settle in Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: Almost immediately. Both sides. Because they didn't like where they were. And at that time

the best way to get places was on the river. They got somehow or another to Louisville or Cincinnati, and then they came to Memphis. That was before the Civil War, I think.

MR. LEVIN: And what did they do when they came to Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: My father's father, my grandfather on my father's side, was a country boy. He came from a wine-growing country. Beautiful vineyards. I visited them in Germany. And a farmer. But also, he had been apprenticed to a jeweler, and he knew about watches, and he first thought he would open up a jewelry business plus a pawn shop in Memphis. But he didn't like the city, so he got acreage, like a sharecropper, on a big farm in Mississippi, below Memphis, which is Hernando in Desoto County, and he tried to raise grapes, which was a disaster. Then he tried to raise cattle, which shouldn't have been a disaster, but it was; and then he raised cotton. And he had five children, including my father. They were all born in Memphis. Because when grandma was ready to deliver, the facilities were not available in the country down there, and they came here and that's where they were born. And then [they] went back. But my grandfather after a while he gave up on the farming.

MR. LEVIN: And he settled in Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: And he came in and he went into the jewelry business. Opened up a store in Memphis which was during the war.

MR. LEVIN: During the Civil War.

MR. GOODMAN: It's closing now [the jewelry store], but it's called Julius Goodman & Son. It formerly was called Joseph Goodman & Son, but my uncle changed the name of it to Julius Goodman, and his son, who is over eighty. Now, my paternal grandfather -- I know he went through Cincinnati. And he was very meticulous -- he was an urban person, and he had had business experience. He got affiliated with an insurance company -- whether he sold insurance policies -- I think he handled bookkeeping and internal arrangement. But he later opened his own insurance agency, and that's what he did. Because in those times, women didn't do anything except work -- [trails off]

MR. LEVIN: Your father was born in Memphis.

MR. GOODMAN: And my father was born in Memphis.

MR. LEVIN: What year was that?

MR. GOODMAN: 1867.

MR. LEVIN: And your mother was also born in Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: 1875.

MR. LEVIN: What business were your parents in?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, my father stayed down on the farm, and really got no formal education. When he was about fifteen years old, maybe sixteen, he came to Memphis. He and his older brother, Abe Goodman, got hold of a very capable man who had been born in Germany, who knew everything about rectifying liquor, and with him they started what they called a rectifying operation, which they would buy spirits with alcohol and they would fix it up so that it became

whiskey or brandy or something. They had a very successful business. They had the brand name -- several brand names of Raleigh Springs Whiskey and so on. And that went along alright until 1907. The Tennessee legislature abolished all liquor in Tennessee except for Jack Daniels, which was accepted. But there was no more liquor business, and they went into the real estate business. My uncle went into banking and manufacturing and so forth. He was much more ambitious and energetic and cold-hearted than my father. But my father did all right.

MR. LEVIN: Do you have any siblings?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, I have three sisters.

MR. LEVIN: Are they younger or older than you?

MR. GOODMAN: Both. I have two -- well, I have none now, because my oldest sister died last month, at age 91.

MR. LEVIN: What was her married name?

MR. GOODMAN: Baum. B-A-U-M. She lived in Kansas City, Missouri. She was married here in Memphis in 1922. She had two children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren .

MR. LEVIN: And your other two sisters?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, my second sister stayed in Memphis - married a Memphian. Her married name was Ashner. And she had two children who are here now, and grandchildren. One of her grandchildren is married to the daughter of Nina Katz. My baby sister, after college, married and moved to

St. Louis, where she died in the early eighties. And she had a husband and two sons. Her husband died and the two sons -- we keep close, very close.

MR. LEVIN: Where did you go to elementary school, Mr. Goodman?

MR. GOODMAN: The first time I went to school was at age five. Because I was born in January, and perhaps I'm wrong, but if you were going to be six by a certain time, they let you go either when you were five or wait till you were six and a half. And I got to go when I was five. To public schools. And I didn't like it.

MR. LEVIN: What school was that?

MR. GOODMAN: It was a school called Mosby School. It's now in the slums, behind the Episcopal St. Mary's Cathedral, and I didn't like it. So I got transferred by the Board to a school very near where Temple Israel later moved, on Montgomery, but it was called Maury School. Do you know about that school?

MR. LEVIN: The names are familiar to me.

MR. GOODMAN: And then, when I was about to enter the fourth grade, fifth grade -- when I was about to enter the fourth grade at public school, my mother was not satisfied with the arrangements at the school, although I had a wonderful teacher one year. I went to a private school called Memphis University School, run by two young men who had graduated from the University of Virginia and opened a university school here. And I went there eight years, but in

order to get in there, I had to skip a grade. I had to take some exams.

MR. LEVIN: So you graduated from the Memphis University School in high school?

MR. GOODMAN: That's right, when I was sixteen years old.

MR. LEVIN: What year was that?

MR. GOODMAN: That was in 1920. I went there in 1912 and graduated in 1920.

MR. LEVIN: When you graduated high school, what did you do or where did you go?

MR. GOODMAN: Princeton. I went to Princeton for four years and got a degree -- bachelor's degree in 1924.

MR. LEVIN: Majoring in?

MR. GOODMAN: History and politics.

MR. LEVIN: History and politics. Now, after you graduated from Princeton University --

MR. GOODMAN: I went to Harvard Law School. That was for three years. And I graduated in 1927.

MR. LEVIN: And when you graduated from law school, you returned to Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: I went on a trip. And I had been promised a trip of a year, but it didn't materialize. I came back and I went into a law office.

MR. LEVIN: Before you came back to Memphis and you went on that trip --

MR. GOODMAN: Well, I cut it short, because without my permission, my father and a young lawyer con-

spired and they said that I just had to come home because they needed me to work on two cases. In other words, I came home and I went into that law firm -- the one that I knew I would always go into but I never had spoken to anybody about. The chief reason was that the three principal partners -- very small law firm -- but one of them was a man named Elias Gates, one of the great Jewish leaders in Memphis in his day. And he had gone to Harvard Law School. He was from a little town in Arkansas. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 1897. Anyway, I went there, and I have been at the same place now for over sixty years.

MR. LEVIN: Sixty years! Who were the other two principals?

MR. GOODMAN: Judge Julian Wilson. The name of the firm was Wilson, Gates & Armstrong. Judge Julian Wilson had been a judge down in Mississippi and moved to Memphis. He had changed his name from Wilzinsky and married a Christian lady, the most professional southerner I have ever met in my life. And he became southern like her. But he was a brilliant man. He didn't acknowledge his Jewishness. He had no children, but his nephew, named C-O-H-N, pronounced "Kahn," didn't associate with Jews either, until the time you're talking about a little later during the war, [when] he became President of the Jewish Welfare Fund and was the leading financier, raising money and organizing when the refugees came after the war here.

MR. LEVIN: And the third principal in the law firm?

MR. GOODMAN: Armstrong -- Walter Armstrong. He's probably one of the most accomplished lawyers of this area. He went to Yale from a little town in Mississippi. He went to law school at Yale. He did a lot of Bar Association work and became President of the American Bar Association. He was President during the war in 1941, 1942.

MR. LEVIN: In 1927, you mentioned that you took a trip -- where did you take this trip to?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, I thought I was going to take a trip around the world, but I went to Britain -- I went to England and Scotland. And I went to France, Belgium, and a little Italy, because I was going to go to Germany and go back to Italy. But my trip ended in Germany and I came home.

MR. LEVIN: You had a special interest in visiting Germany.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: And what was that interest?

MR. GOODMAN: My grandfather's family, the Hirsch family, in southern Germany.

MR. LEVIN: And what was the name of the city in southern Germany in which they lived?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, they lived in several cities, but most of them lived in Ulm.

MR. LEVIN: How do you spell that?

MR. GOODMAN: U-L-M. Ulm.

MR. LEVIN: And you visited them in Ulm?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes I did, and they couldn't agree with whom I should stay, so I stayed at the hotel. Something like the Peabody. And they had a big party. And they invited people from around. Somebody came from Stuttgart and other places.

MR. LEVIN: Was the Hirsch family in Germany your grandmother's family?

MR. GOODMAN: My grandfather's.

MR. LEVIN: Your grandfather's. Was that an extensive family?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes. That's the one with -- Leopold Hirsch, my great-grandfather, had seven sons and a daughter.

MR. LEVIN: And they were all living in that area?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: And you visited with them in 1927.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, but only two or three spoke English. Included in that group were two young boys, one about sixteen and the other younger, both of whom came over here, and they took me on a trip. We went swimming in a river and things like that. And later, Herman, the older one, who I was particularly close to -- he was a fiery redhead -- came and settled in New York and married a very rich girl, and he didn't like New York, so he moved to Monroe, Louisiana, and he had a successful career there. And he had a heart attack and died.

MR. LEVIN: So, at the age of twenty-three, after graduating from Harvard Law School, taking a trip to Europe, where you connected with your family's roots, you returned to Memphis and associated with this law firm.

MR. GOODMAN: That's right, where I have stayed ever since. Now, the law firm has changed its name several times, and I'm not going to go into that. But it's the same place. I've never moved. We've moved, physically, but I have never moved from that law firm.

MR. LEVIN: In what year did you get married, Mr. Goodman?

MR. GOODMAN: I never got married.

MR. LEVIN: Okay. You became affiliated with one of the Synagogues or the Temple, in Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, it was very easy because my father's father had for a long time been treasurer of what then was called Congregation Children of Israel, and my mother's father, Hirsch, was Secretary. In fact, I had a marriage contract which they signed as officers. It's down in the Temple there. I went to religious school and Temple. Now, my grandmother --

MR. LEVIN: Were you confirmed at the Temple?

MR. GOODMAN: I was confirmed.

MR. LEVIN: At the age of sixteen?

MR. GOODMAN: No, earlier. I was confirmed in 1918. That was fourteen.

MR. LEVIN: So, when you returned to Memphis, you continued affiliation with Temple Israel, the Congrega-

tion Children of Israel, which was the Synagogue of your family?

MR. GOODMAN: That's right. It had originally been an Orthodox Synagogue, but it changed and it joined Isaac M. Wise and the new movement, and was one of the original Congregations in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

MR. LEVIN: When you returned [from Europe], did you begin to take an active part in the life of the Congregation -- on the Board, on some subcommittees?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: Could you perhaps share with me in what years those were?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, as far as I can remember, all I can tell you is that I was on so many committees and on the Board. First, my father had been on the Board, and he had been Treasurer. I loved it when he went to the Board meeting, he would come and I'd say, "Tell me -- what did they do tonight?" I knew all the ins and outs -- but he never wanted to be President, and never would. And later they asked me to be President several times, and I would not. Because I thought it was not right for a single person to be President. I thought they had to have a married person. But they finally -- I don't know whether you know this -- but some years ago they elected me honorary trustee of Temple Israel for life, but I don't go to any meetings any more.

MR. LEVIN: In the 1930's you also became active in other aspects of the Jewish Community as well.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: Not just Temple Israel. Were you serving on the Board of the Temple in the 1930's? 1935, 1936?

MR. GOODMAN: I think so, but I'd have to look.

MR. LEVIN: What other aspects --

MR. GOODMAN: All right, the first thing I did that I can remember was in the Pinch, they had a Neighborhood House -- a settlement house. And I met Miss Stella Lowenstein, who was the head of what they called the Federation, and she said, "They need somebody over there." These youngsters, they were half Jewish and half Italian at that time. They've got a lot of young boys over there. They need somebody to organize them. So I had a great friend with whom I grew up -- a doctor, who was a pediatrician and an athlete. And I got him and we went over there to the Neighborhood House and organized a sportsman's club. And I tried to teach them something about procedure and organization and things, and David Goldman taught them athletics -- gymnastics.

MR. LEVIN: Mr. Goodman, what year was that?

MR. GOODMAN: 1928, 1929.

MR. LEVIN: So you became involved with the Neighborhood House, which was an attempt to help Americanize the immigrants -- teach them English, teach them citizenship.

MR. GOODMAN: They also spoke English. These were second-generation. Now, some of my boys, every once in a while, somebody will come up to me whom I don't know and say, "You don't remember me -- I was in your club at the Neighborhood House."

MR. LEVIN: You were their mentor --

MR. GOODMAN: Among them, some are quite prominent in the city. Bozoffs -- there were two little Bozoff boys. And one of the Italian boys, ran a barbecue restaurant downtown, and I didn't know that until he came up one day told me, and said, "Don't you remember --" Well, anyway --

MR. LEVIN: From the Neighborhood House, you became involved in other aspects of the Jewish Community

MR. GOODMAN: Well, the general community. Because I have served more time in the general community than in the Jewish Community. And I don't want to go into all that, but I helped -- that's all right -- you didn't want to know all that. Let me just say that I was Chapter Chairman of the Red Cross. I was President of the United Way. I was President of what they called the Health and Welfare Planning Council. Things like that.

MR. LEVIN: You were heavily involved in civic responsibilities?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: In the Jewish Community --

MR. GOODMAN: I was on the B'nai Brith Home when Mr. Gates that I told you about -- he was one of the

founders of the B'nai Brith Home, which opened in 1927. And his client, Charles Hayes, who was the head of Marx & Bensdorf, was a big backer of it, and he and Mr. Gates worked hard on it. When he died suddenly, in 1929, and to the best of my recollection, I was elected to the Board of the B'nai Brith Home, to take his place, in 1929. And I stayed on it till the 1980's.

MR. LEVIN: In addition to the B'nai Brith Home, you also became involved in the work with the Memphis Jewish Welfare Federation.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: Do you recall what years that was?

MR. GOODMAN: Probably in 1929 or 1930 -- something like that.

MR. LEVIN: And you remained on the Board?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, first I was on committees. That's the way it was in the Red Cross. I was on committees and then after the war, I was on committees and became President.

MR. LEVIN: What year were you President?

MR. GOODMAN: I don't know.

MR. LEVIN: In the minutes of the Memphis Jewish Welfare Federation, it suggests that you were President in 1938, 1939.

MR. GOODMAN: Now, we're talking about the Welfare Fund?

MR. LEVIN: Yes.

MR. GOODMAN: I was President of the then-Federation, the Family Service before I was President of the Welfare Fund.

MR. LEVIN: Okay, but you did serve as President of the Welfare Fund? What was the mission of the Welfare Federation -- the Memphis Jewish Federation? What was its mission?

MR. GOODMAN: The Jewish Federation was misnamed. It was a family service organization. It was part of the Community Chest.

MR. LEVIN: And what was the Memphis Welfare Fund?

MR. GOODMAN: That changed its name later to the Memphis Jewish Federation. The Welfare Fund raised money. It didn't operate. The Federation, or the Family Agency, operated, but it was a social service case work agency.

MR. LEVIN: In the 1930's, what kind of case work was the Jewish Welfare Federation involved in? Those were the Depression years.

MR. GOODMAN: They had indigent families, and they gave more advice than they gave money. But they did give money to indigent people, and there were quite a few.

MR. LEVIN: The minutes indicate that there were some discussions about how the Jewish Welfare Federation and the general community interacted with each other, and since the Community Chest was involved in helping indigents as well, and as a result of the Depression, when people

started traveling through, there were Jewish indigents, and there were discussions --

MR. GOODMAN: Oh, it was way before that.

MR. LEVIN: I understand. But during the 1930's ....

MR. GOODMAN: During the 1930's they had a Traveler's Aid in operation. They had an agreement [with the Community Agencies] when they had a Jewish traveler, they would refer it to the Jewish organization. They did help travelers.

MR. LEVIN: Was the Jewish Welfare Federation involved in assisting new immigrants who came to Memphis in the 1930's? The 1930 census indicates a Memphis Jewish population of between 9,000 and 10,000. The 1940 census shows something like 14,000.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, but the Welfare Fund took the lead in that. It was a mixed up organization of things, as I recall it. The Welfare Fund raised money. And then when immigration started, they formed a committee, and with the help of the Family Service Agency, they took care. The social work was done --

MR. LEVIN: By the social work agency.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, and that was sort of outside of the Community Chest, because they didn't want the Community Chest to take care of the financial burden of the refugees.

MR. LEVIN: When you were elected President of the Jewish Welfare Fund in 1938, if I'm not mistaken, Mr.

George Abraham was the campaign chairman of that year, 1938 -- 1939?

MR. GOODMAN: I think so.

MR. LEVIN: Was the Welfare Fund, to the best of your knowledge, involved in sponsoring German Jewish refugees particularly, in 1936, 1937, 1938? Officially as an agency, sponsoring German Jewish refugees coming to Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: They took care of them if they needed the help.

MR. LEVIN: But they didn't actually sponsor them?

MR. GOODMAN: No, you couldn't do that to individuals.

MR. LEVIN: But there was no organized activity on the part of the Welfare Fund to get individuals to sponsor HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society].

MR. GOODMAN: No, wait, organizations like (???) and other national organizations, when they wanted to send people here, or other people wanted to come here, they would come through the larger organization and were referred here.

MR. LEVIN: But Memphis did accept German Jewish refugees referred here by HIAS.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: And assumed responsibility for them?

MR. GOODMAN: That's right.

MR. LEVIN: And that was a formal, organized activity on the part of the Welfare Fund?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: And the actual delivery of services was done by

the Jewish Welfare Federation, once they were here?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, that's right.

MR. LEVIN: You mentioned earlier that members of your family -- cousins, were still in Germany. You had visited them in 1927. Did you have any contact with them -- correspondence with them -- after the rise of Hitler to power in 1933?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes. That's when they all wanted to come here. Not to Memphis, but to --

MR. LEVIN: To the United States?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes. That's when I gave all those affidavits.

MR. LEVIN: Do you remember what years you began to sign affidavits for the members of your family?

MR. GOODMAN: I think it was after 1935 or 1936, something like that.

MR. LEVIN: And for how long did that continue?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, until the war.

MR. LEVIN: Until 1941?

MR. GOODMAN: Until we couldn't do it any more.

MR. LEVIN: Do you recall approximately how many affidavits you signed? Ten, twenty, forty?

MR. GOODMAN: Twenty-five -- something like that.

MR.LEVIN: And these were for members of your family?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: So you were directly and personally responsible for saving --

MR. GOODMAN: I didn't have to -- every one of them took care of themselves.

MR. LEVIN: Did any of them settle in Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: No. Not one. Chicago, New Orleans, New York, other places.

MR. LEVIN: Your signing the affidavits -- do you know of any other individuals in the Memphis Jewish Community who at the time were also signing affidavits?

MR. GOODMAN: Oh, everybody was. Many were.

MR. LEVIN: Perhaps you can recall some names?

MR. GOODMAN: No.

MR.LEVIN: If we might change the subject for just a minute, Mr. Goodman. At the time in Memphis, Mr. Crump was the major and dominant political power in Memphis. Did you, as the President of the Memphis Jewish Jewish Federation and later the Memphis Jewish Welfare Fund, did you have any occasion to talk to Mr. Crump about Jewish issues or Jewish concerns?

MR. GOODMAN: No. He was a very close friend of my family.

MR. LEVIN: A close personal friend?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes. I had known him since I was a little boy, because his sons went to that school where I went. And one of the boys was just a little younger than I was. He had three sons, and one of them was just a little younger. And I knew him through his sons. My uncle, Abe Goodman, was one of his strongest political supporters. Gave money to his campaigns and things. He was appointed to the

Park Commission, where he served for so many years. My aunt, who married my uncle who was the jeweler --

MR. LEVIN: And what was her name?

MR. GOODMAN: Mrs. Julius Goodman -- was appointed to the School Board when it was very small. And she was on the School Board for fifteen or twenty years. She was the first Jewish woman who had been on the School Board. When she got off, Mrs. Arthur Seessel was appointed.

MR. LEVIN: Can you recall, were there any other members of the Jewish Community in the 1930's who were connected to Mr. Crump, either politically or personally, as you were?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, yes. One of his chief lieutenants, Will Gerber, absolutely. He became a district attorney and a power in the machine. He was a member of the machine. We never were in the machine.

MR. LEVIN: Were there any other Jews? Mr. Lichterman, Ira Lichterman?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: Was a close political associate?

MR. GOODMAN: I think so.

MR. LEVIN: And a close personal friend?

MR. GOODMAN: I think --

MR. LEVIN: Abe Waldauer --

MR. GOODMAN: No, he was an opponent.

MR. LEVIN: He was an opponent?

MR. GOODMAN: He was a maverick.

MR. LEVIN: And who is the other person you were just about to mention?

MR. GOODMAN: Willie Loewenberg. Again, a very talented lawyer who just died recently. William Rosenfield who went to the State Legislature. And there was a man who was not -- he didn't acknowledge he was Jewish, but he was very Jewish -- named Bejach.

MR. LEVIN: Lois Bejach.

MR. GOODMAN: Lois Bejach.

MR. LEVIN: A very prominent attorney.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, he became Chancellor, and then --

MR. LEVIN: Will Gerber, who worked in his law firm, was an associate -- was appointed in his place. When Mr. Bejach died. When he passed away -- Will Gerber was appointed to fill his place as City Attorney.

MR. GOODMAN: No.

MR. LEVIN: No? Because Mr. Gerber was a member of Mr. Bejach's law firm.

MR. GOODMAN: I don't recall that. Bejach became a judge, and he was a Chancellor, and then he was on the Court of Appeals in Jackson in the Western District of Tennessee. But he lived long after Will Gerber. Will Gerber predeceased him.

MR. LEVIN: During the 1930's and before the 1930's, but my focus is on the 1930's, Memphis was a very racially segregated town.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: How did this racial segregation express itself?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, there was like apartheid, almost. It was unthinkable at that time to have any social relations with the Jews. But that changed.

MR. LEVIN: With the Jews, you said. You meant the blacks.

MR. GOODMAN: It began to change. I was President of an organization called Health and Welfare Planning Council. And one of the young men there was Downing Pryor.

MR. LEVIN: Who just passed away recently.

MR. GOODMAN: Who just passed away. And my cousin, a wonderful woman, Mrs. Neuton Stern, and she had been very active in that organization [the Memphis Health and Welfare Planning Council], and we had a meeting.

MR. LEVIN: What years are we talking about? 1950's, later?

MR. GOODMAN: Late 1940's or 1950's. We said, it's ridiculous. There's no black member on this Board. We have to have a black member -- at least one or two, and we had a terrible time getting it. They didn't do it for a while. The next year, finally, we did. Some people resigned. Also, at the Red Cross at that time. Oh, I think this was a little later. When we were in the Korean War -- had a blood bank here, because they needed the blood. And the Red Cross ran it. There were some people who resented that they were taking black blood. And I was the Chairman of the Chapter at that time. I had a hard time with that.

MR. LEVIN: If we might get back to the 1930's, the racial

segregation in the 1930's, there were separate facilities -- separate theaters, separate everything in Memphis.

MR. GOODMAN: Separate schools.

MR. LEVIN: Separate schools.

MR. GOODMAN: They couldn't even go into Overton Park. Finally, they got one day [a year] they could go in.

MR. LEVIN: Now, Mr. Goodman, do you feel that in that period of time, that there was also anti-Semitism?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, yes.

MR. LEVIN: How did this anti-Semitism express itself?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, it was mostly social anti-Semitism. But I think that anybody who was deeply anti-black was conditioned to be anti-Jewish.

MR. LEVIN: Were there any residential areas in the city that were closed to Jews?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: Can you identify them?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, I think that one I can -- Morningside Park. You know where that is? Right on Parkway between Poplar and Union.

MR. LEVIN: Were there any kinds of quota systems in the higher education systems in Memphis -- the law schools, the medical schools --

MR. GOODMAN: They didn't have any law schools.

MR. LEVIN: Private law schools. The medical school, the professional schools?

MR. GOODMAN: I think there were. I know that when I was going to college, Princeton had a quota system, but I don't know what it was or anything about it. Incidentally, Princeton now has a Jewish President. Did you know that?

MR. LEVIN: Yes, it's ironic. If we might perhaps begin to approach the events that--am I tiring you out? Perhaps we might stop [pause while Mr. Goodman makes a phone call]. If we might begin to approach the events of the late 1930's -- 1935, 1936 -- as the news of Hitler's anti-Semitic policies and actions began to infiltrate back into the United States through the press, through the media, through eyewitness accounts -- such that finally, in November, 1938, a young Polish Jew attempted to assassinate a high German official in the Paris Embassy, and that triggered the gigantic pogrom -- a gigantic riot throughout Germany that became known as "Kristalnacht," the night of broken glass. The Jews realized for the first time that they were in dire straits. Now, you still had family members there. Were they in communication with you describing to you the climate, the atmosphere?

MR. GOODMAN: We got letters, but they were very guarded in what they wrote, as I recall. But we knew that they were in terrible shape.

MR. LEVIN: When you say that you knew, how did you know?

MR. GOODMAN; Well, through the newspapers. That is one reason to find some comfort in the fact that my mother died that next month, in December, 1938. Because she didn't see what happened later. Because it would have -- she couldn't have taken it. But there was nothing we could do, really -- at least we didn't do it.

MR. LEVIN: One of the things that you did do was sign affidavits for members of your family, and I'm trying to explore whether the organized, official Jewish Community, through the Welfare Federation, the Welfare Fund, undertook those kinds of activities as well.

MR. GOODMAN: I don't think so. They took care of the people who came here. As today -- somewhat similar when the Russian refugees are now coming in greater numbers, and see that they are received. They come under some other auspices. They're sent here.

MR. LEVIN: It's true that they're sent here, but the Jewish Family Service with funding from the Welfare Federation --

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, they take care of them -- their organizational structure -- but that took a long time to happen in Memphis.

MR. LEVIN: Was there any activity on the part of the organized Jewish Community to protest the post-Kristalnacht riots, pogroms and fines, and opression of the Jewish Community in Germany? Were there any organized protest rallies in the Jewish Community?

MR. GOODMAN: On a very low key. I don't recall any organized Jewish protest that was disassociated from a civic protest.

MR. LEVIN: Do you recall if the Rabbi at the Temple, Dr. Ettelson, if he perhaps addressed the Board of the Temple, about this issue? Or did Rabbi Taxon from the Baron Hirsch Synagogue or Rabbi Ettelson, who were both members of the Memphis Jewish Welfare Federation Committee, and also the Welfare Fund -- did they address the Board about the urgency to raise additional dollars to try and assume responsibility?

MR. GOODMAN: They were very active. I don't recall any appearance before the Board.

MR. LEVIN: When you say they were very active, what do you mean?

MR. GOODMAN: Making speeches. Sermons.

MR. LEVIN: Dr. Ettelson spoke out in sermons about the plight of the German Jewish Community at Temple Israel?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN; Did he address the Board of Temple Israel about it? At its Board meetings? Do you have recollections about that?

MR. GOODMAN: No. I don't recall it.

MR. LEVIN: Okay, at the present time, if the Memphis Jewish Community has issues of great concern that

it wants to address that affect the Jewish people's interests, Israel Ethiopian Jewry, Soviet Jewry -- we have people who can connect with our Senators and our Congressmen and lobby them. We might organize letter-writing campaigns. Did any of that take place in 1938 after Kristalnacht?

MR. GOODMAN: I don't think so.

MR. LEVIN: Why do you think, in your opinion, did that not happen?

MR. GOODMAN: I think they were so -- on account of fear.

MR. LEVIN: What did they fear? What did the Jewish Community fear?

MR. GOODMAN: That they might be treated similarly here.

MR. LEVIN: In your opinion, the fear of anti-Semitic outbursts in Memphis and in the United States had a chilling effect.

MR. GOODMAN: That's the only way I can view it - yes. But I don't recall any organized Jewish protest as such.

MR. LEVIN: The major agenda of the Jewish Community in the United States after 1938 was to try and get German Jews out of Germany. You did that admirably for your family, more than twenty-five of them. Did the Jewish Community use any of its political connections to lobby its Congressmen and Senators?

MR. GOODMAN: If they did, I don't know about it.

MR. LEVIN: There is no record of anything. Mr. Gerber talking to Mr. Crump. Mr. Crump had access to

President Roosevelt. Was a close supporter of his. Was one of his first supporters in 1932, and was one of his late supporters in 1940, before he announced for his third term, he was still a supporter. Do you know if Mr. Lichterman, if members of your family, spoke to Mr. Crump and said, "Mr. Crump, we need your help?"

MR. GOODMAN: I think not.

MR. LEVIN: You don't know?

MR. GOODMAN: I don't know.

MR. LEVIN: Okay. Another important Memphian was Senator McKellar, who was Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. And he was a close political associate of Mr. Crump. The Jewish Community had access to him as well. Do you know of any efforts that were made to lobby Mr. McKellar?

MR. GOODMAN: No, but I'm sure there were. There must have been.

MR. LEVIN: Another Memphian who was a young attorney at the time, in the Department of the Interior, was an associate of --

MR. GOODMAN: Abe Fortas.

MR. LEVIN: Abe Fortas. Now, Abe Fortas had Memphis connections -- family, friends. Do you know if any attempts were made after 1938 to try and energize Mr. Fortas, to utilize his influence with Mr. Ickes, with the Roosevelts, with regard to the German Jewish refugee problem?

MR. GOODMAN: No, I don't. Because I was a great friend of Abe Fortas, but I never heard of anything like that. They didn't need it. I'm sure he did what he could do, and so did McKellar and, no doubt, Roosevelt, but everything --

MR. LEVIN: What gives you the feeling that you are so sure that they did speak to Mr. McKellar and Mr. Crump and Mr. Fortas and they did what they could do?

MR. GOODMAN: I think that sounds logical. I don't remember any organized political effort to utilize the friends and power in the city or the state or the nation. I don't recall any. And that's strange that I don't.

MR. LEVIN: If we might just move to June of 1939, the incident of the St. Louis, which was a refugee-laden passenger liner from Hamburg, whose passengers had visas to Cuba. And when they arrived in Havana Harbor, their visas were repudiated, and the American Jewish Community made efforts to convince the Cuban government to honor the visas temporarily, to give the Jewish Community a chance to bring them to the United States. When that was refused, the captain of the ship sailed very slowly up the coast, past Miami, New Orleans, to give the American Jewish Community an opportunity to try and get visas for these German Jewish refugees. These events were reported in the newspaper, The Commercial Appeal, the Press-Scimitar. The question I'm asking is was there any discussion -- public discussion -- in the Welfare Federation, the Memphis Jewish Welfare Fund, Temple Israel,

of which you were a Board Member, where you attended services -- about the need to try and help these 907 refugees?

MR. GOODMAN: I don't recall any. There must have been, but I don't recall any. Have you talked to anybody who recalls it?

MR. LEVIN: Judge Strauch is absolutely adamant that Mr. Gerber -- and this is Judge Strauch's description -- raised cain -- and when I asked him what that meant, he felt that it meant that Mr. Gerber tried to raise dollars, tried to get people to sponsor the refugees. Do you have any recollection of that?

MR. GOODMAN: No.

MR. LEVIN: Now, the Jewish Welfare Fund did not become actively involved in a special campaign to try and prevent these refugees from being sent back to Germany?

MR. GOODMAN: No. That's the kind of thing that would be a national organization in Washington and New York, and then they would call on -- if every city in the country were to go out and do that, there would be absolute chaos. Now, do you know if the national organizations --

MR. LEVIN: Yes, the national organizations did make efforts to do that. If I am correct, you're suggesting, Mr. Goodman, that one of the reasons why the local Jewish Community in Memphis did not engage in any kind of activities was because they relied on the national organizations.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes.

MR. LEVIN: Is it possible that the Memphis Jewish Community did not want to embark upon any public campaigns because they feared anti-Semitism in Memphis?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, that might be some reason why they weren't so vocal as a community --

MR. LEVIN: As they are today.

MR. GOODMAN: But I think that if there had been a national effort and they had asked Memphis to become active, they wouldn't have refused it.

MR. LEVIN: You're suggesting then that it was a failure in organizational structure, nationally?

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, might be.

MR. LEVIN: That the Jewish Community wasn't as organized as they are today?

MR. GOODMAN: That might be.

MR. LEVIN: Was there some concern, in your opinion, on the part of the Memphis Jewish Community, about the influx of German Jewish refugees into Memphis? Is that something that perhaps the Memphis Jewish Community did not want?

MR. GOODMAN: I don't know of that sentiment. No, I never heard that expressed.

MR. LEVIN: So that would be, in your opinion, an invalid suggestion?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, we didn't do the right thing.

MR. LEVIN: When you say that, what do you mean, Mr. Goodman?

MR. GOODMAN: I think we should have done more, especially when that ship was sailing like the Flying Dutchman, without a destination. I know everybody was very much upset about this, and I can't remember what anybody did.

MR. LEVIN: Is it possible that the fact that we were still in the Depression years at that time, and people were preoccupied simply with making a living for themselves and supporting their families -- did that dampen or chill any kind of enthusiasm to assume responsibility for foreign refugees?

MR. GOODMAN: I think that was not a factor.

MR. LEVIN: You don't think that was a factor?

MR. GOODMAN: No.

MR. LEVIN: But you're very adamant that we should have done more?

MR. GOODMAN: I think so.

MR. LEVIN: In your opinion, what could have been done?

MR. GOODMAN: Well, you suggested in your question what might have been done. Everybody with any degree of access to anybody of influence should have raised cain -- the expression was -- got to the Congress, get to the executive -- get somebody to get that ship a place to discharge its passengers and not send them back to Germany.

MR. LEVIN: And the question becomes, why did that not happen?

MR. GOODMAN: That's beyond me. I don't know.

MR. LEVIN: Is it because the people didn't care?

MR. GOODMAN: They cared. I think. They didn't do it. That's one of the greatest tragedies of the world, I think -- of the Hitler regime.

MR. LEVIN: Mr. Goodman, if there is anything else you would like to add that you feel might be helpful...

MR. GOODMAN: Well, I'll think about it. I'll worry about it.

MR. LEVIN: And if there are any other people, perhaps in Memphis, who in your opinion might be able to contribute to helping record those historical events, that would be helpful as well.

MR. GOODMAN: I'm going to talk to my Cousin, Charlie. He's in his eighties too, and he's --

MR. LEVIN: I would appreciate any information --

MR. GOODMAN: I'm going to ask him these questions. If I have something, I'll call you.

MR. LEVIN: I appreciate that. Thank you.

MR. GOODMAN: I think it's a wonderful try on your part to reconstruct that, and that is a mystery -- a mystery.

MR. LEVIN: I appreciate your graciously sharing your time and reaching back into the past. Some of these items were painful to you. If I might just ask you one other question. You mentioned that you were involved in helping a very prominent person salvage a member of the family, by

giving an affidavit -- a very prominent German Jew who wrote to you.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, Albert Einstein.

MR. LEVIN: What was his request, exactly?

MR. GOODMAN: He said, "My wife is a member -- you are related -- I am related to you through my wife. 'She is the cousin of somebody in Ulm."

MR. LEVIN: What did he request?

MR. GOODMAN: That I sign an affidavit.

MR. LEVIN: For whom?

MR. GOODMAN: For his wife's cousin.

MR. LEVIN: For his wife's cousin.

MR. GOODMAN: Yes, and I did, and as far as I know, he came to this country.

MR. LEVIN: The original request -- his letter -- you no longer have. It's a very valuable historical document.

MR. GOODMAN: I should have kept it. It's not the first mistake I've made. That's all he said -- "Will you sign an affidavit?"

MR. LEVIN: I appreciate your time, Mr. Goodman. Thank you very much.

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